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Digital payments made up 99.7% transactions by volume in 2024

Digital payments accounted for 99.7% of total transactions by volume and 97.5% by value in 2024, the RBI said in a report on Thursday. There were 20,849 crore digital transactions in 2024, up from 3,248 crore in 2019, the RBI said in its half-yearly Payment System Report. In terms of value, ₹2,830 lakh crore was transacted through digital payment systems in 2024, up from ₹1,775 lakh crore in 2019.

Tejashwi is INDIA bloc's CM face, Sahani deputy

Announcement after Gehlot-Lalu meet; no word yet on seat-sharing

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

AFTER weeks of hectic parleys, the opposition INDIA bloc on Thursday declared Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav its chief ministerial candidate for the upcoming Bihar elections.

Congress leader Ashok Gehlot announced the decision at a press meet in Patna, a day after he and party's state incharge Krishna Allavaru met RJD chief Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi to end the stalemate over seat-sharing and 'friendly fight' in a few seats.

However, in the press meet, there was no announcement of any seat-sharing deal.

Gehlot, who has been camping in Patna since Wednesday, said Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahani will be the alliance's deputy CM face. He said more deputy CMs would be appointed if INDIA bloc comes to power.

Tejashwi, Sahani, CPI-ML (Liberation)'s Dipankar Bhattacharya, and state Congress president Rajesh Ram addressed the press meet along with Gehlot.

"Tejashwi is a young and dynamic leader. We are also declaring Mukesh Sahani, an EBC leader, who has struggled to rise to this position, as the deputy CM face. Sahani is a messiah of his (Mallah) community. After we win the elections, some people from other sections of society could also be made deputy CMs," Gehlot said.

Tejashwi thanked his father Lalu, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Mallikarjun Kharge for reposing faith in him. "I alone will not become CM but everyone from Bihar will become Change Makers (CMs)," he remarked.

He claimed if a government is formed under his leadership, he would do all the development works the NDA could not do in 20 years, in just 20 months.

Taking a dig at the NDA for not announcing its CM face, Tejashwi said, "Why did the NDA not declare Nitish the CM face? We have been saying that the BJP will not make Nitish the CM. Ami Shah has also clearly said it the elected MLAs will take a decision on this... You (the BJP) have always declared a CM face. Why not this time?"

Gehlot also targeted Shah, saying: "Your contention that Nitish will lead the NDA in the polls has no meaning." P12

Vikassheel Insan Party chief Mukesh Sahani, CPI-ML leader Dipankar Bhattacharya, and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during a press conference in Patna on Thursday | PTI

People won't forget 'jungle raj' for 100 yrs: Modi

Referring to the RJD rule in the past as 'jungle raj', Prime Minister Narendra Modi said people won't forget it for another 100 years. Modi said the opposition alliance is not a 'gathbandhan' but a 'lathbandhan' (coalition of criminals) as its leaders are out on bail

DECODE BIHAR POLL DECIDE

SIT questions four in connection with voters' name deletion in Aland

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI
@Kalaburagi

IN a significant step, the Special Investigation Team (SIT), for the first time, has detained four data centre operators in connection with illegal deletion of names from voters' list in Aland Assembly constituency in the run up to the elections in 2023. The SIT questioned the detainees in Bengaluru on Wednesday for reportedly making forged Form 7 applications to delete voters' names.

A week ago, the SIT had raided their houses and recovered seven laptops and 15 mobile phones. The SIT is probing allegations that data center operators were paid Rs 80 for each Form 7 application (for deleting the names of voters from the voters' list). A total of 6,018 applications were made between December 2022 and February 2023, working to a total payment of Rs. 4.8 lakh.

The state police had registered an FIR on deletion of voters' names after BR Patil, Aland MLA, and deputy chairman of State Planning Commission, raised a complaint in 2023. The investigation was taken over by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) this September.

The issue became a national furore after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi highlighted the alleged vote theft in Aland.

Within a few days of the SIT taking over the investigation, a set of voters' list was found burnt in a garbage yard in Aland.

The SIT visited the spot and collected half- burnt voters' list and sent them to Forensic Science Laboratory in Kalaburragi.

Last week, the SIT had raided the houses of former Aland MLA, Subhash Guttedar, and his sons, Harshanand and Santosh Guttedar.

CONTINUED ON P4

EXPRESS READ

Three held for gang-rape of city beautician

Bengaluru: Police have arrested three men in connection with the gang-rape of a 27-year-old beautician near Dasanapura on Tuesday night. The accused, under the influence of alcohol, raped the woman after assaulting two persons, including her son, with cricket bats | P5

PM to virtually address ASEAN-India summit

New Delhi: India and Malaysia announced on Thursday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join the ASEAN-India summit on October 26 virtually after a telephonic conversation between the two leaders | P11

AI faces 250 seat faults a month

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

AN average of 250 passenger seats on Air India flights develop faults every month, posing persistent challenge for the Tata group as it works to modernise the ageing fleet it acquired from the government in January 2022.

According to airline insiders, the main hurdle lies in the non-availability of spare parts for older aircraft, many of which are 15-20 years old. In several cases, even the original manufacturers of seat components have shut down.

"Seat maintenance was never a priority earlier," said a senior Air India source. "A seat includes not just the cushion but also trays, in-flight entertainment screens, and fittings. Sometimes, passengers themselves cause damage during travel, and immediate repairs aren't possible if the aircraft is due for a quick turnaround."

While travellers have long voiced concerns over poor cabin conditions, a recent social media outcry by a business class passenger brought renewed scrutiny. The passenger, flying AI 187 from Delhi to Toronto laimed he was asked to sign a consent form acknowledging his seat's broken tray before boarding.

The airline, however, insists that a large-scale retrofit and modernisation plan is already in motion. All 26 A320 aircraft have been upgraded, featuring new seats and interiors.

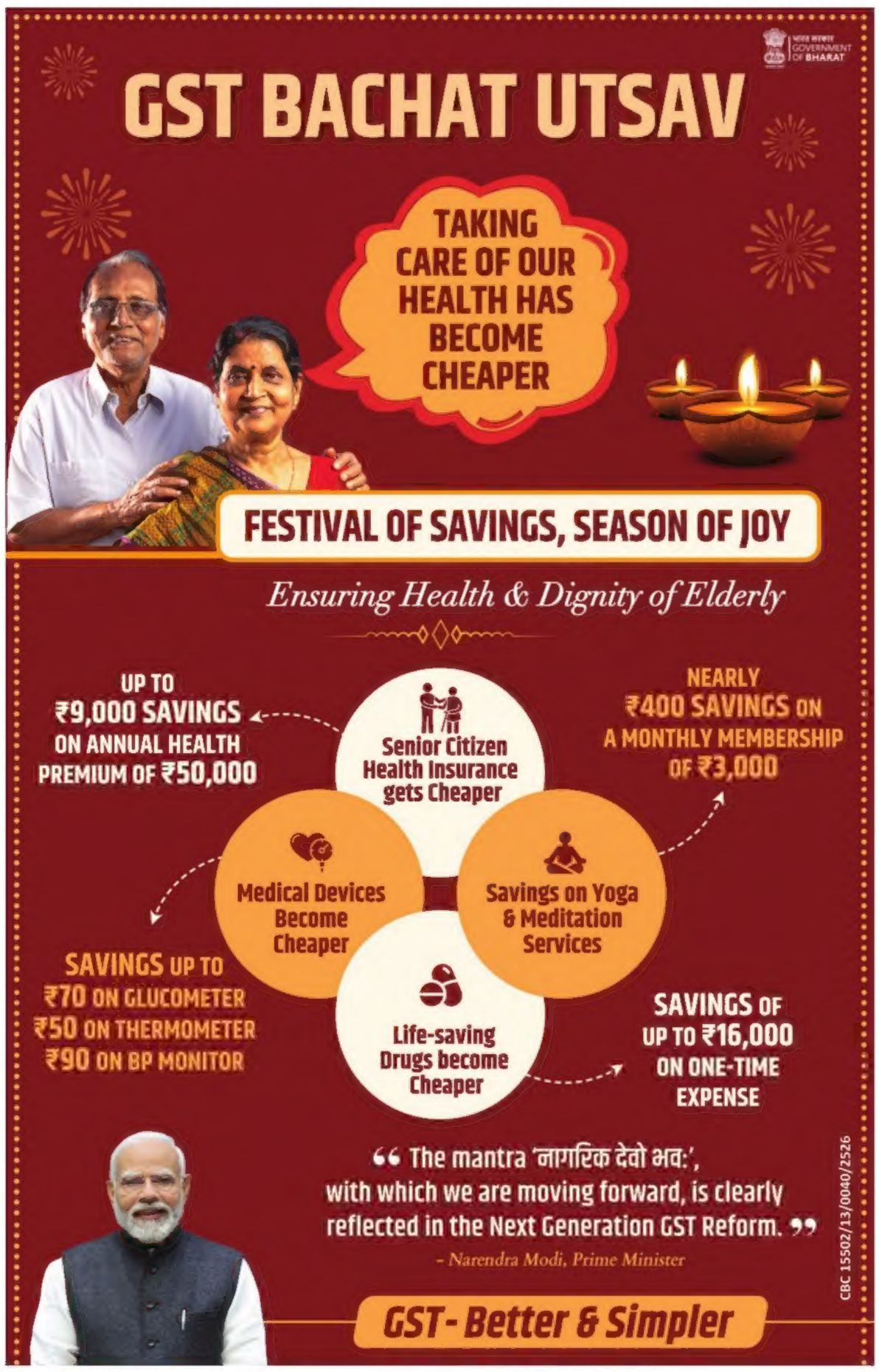
Yathindra for Satish Jarkiholi as Siddu heir

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Belagavi

AMID the intense power-sharing tussle within the Karnataka Congress, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah has set off a political tremor by openly hinting that PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi could succeed his father.

At a public event in Raibag on Wednesday, Yathindra praised Jarkiholi, calling him a "capable and deserving successor" to CM Siddaramaiah. The remark, coming at a time when the Congress is battling internal friction, has triggered a storm of speculation within party ranks, and reset the political narrative.

The question of who will lead the Congress after Siddaramaiah has long divided the party. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, representing the Vokkaliga community, is seen as a leader with the potential to become the next chief minister. P4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